



GREATER AKRON

AUDUBON Matters

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Witt's End

A Bird in Hand ... – by *Clyde Witt, editor*

It was one of those fine, crisp mornings in late September. The kind of day that reminds us of why we live in northeast Ohio. I was hiking along the Hike & Bike Trail in northern Summit County.

An impressive array of birds was keeping my walking pace to a minimum. I counted eight Eastern Towhees on the move south, chipping as they went as if only one guy had the road map and they needed to stay in contact with him.

I saw my first White-crowned Sparrow of the fall season. The first surprise bird of the day, a juvenile Northern Mockingbird popped onto a nearby snag. Great spot in this part of the county. I've seen the occasional adult in the area, but never a juvenile. Does this mean they're nesting here about?

The second surprise bird was at the other end of the life spectrum. Lying in the middle of the bike path, toes pointing at the cloudless sky, was what I first took to be a warbler species. Well, at least it's something to add to my Dead List, I thought. I picked it up and realized I had an identification challenge to deal with. Hmmm. Confusing fall warbler, for sure. After a few minutes of contemplation I bagged the bird for further examination at home.

Heading back, I ran into Ann and Dwight Chasar, birders extraordinaire. After a brief chat I pulled out my specimen for an expert opinion. Hmmm, was the consensus. I suggested I back off 25 feet and they look at it through binoculars. This close-up examination was creating confused fall birders. Too much information when you can examine them in the hand, I thought.

We three more-or-less agreed that it's probably a Red-eyed Vireo. Since Susan volunteers with Andy Jones at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, preparing the museum's bird-study collection, I've turned the bird over to her to give to Andy for the final identification. Dr. Andy goes beyond examining a bird in the hand. He gets into the DNA of the matter.



Program Schedule

Meetings

The chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Christmas Count. June is our annual picnic, so the meeting place is not always the same. There are no meetings in July and August. Meetings are held at the Mingo Shelter in Sand Run MetroPark in the Merriman Valley. The entrance is off Sand Run Parkway, east of the ford and east of the Shady Hollow Pavilion. Check MetroParks maps at www.summitmetroparks.org for a map of Sand Run Park. The doors open at 6:30 and the meeting starts at 7:00. We usually start with a short business session before the main program. Meetings are open to the public so bring a friend. Refreshments are served by our outstanding hospitality committee.

Once again, your executive committee has come up with a stellar lineup for the 2008-2009 season. We still have a few blanks in the schedule, so stay tuned and keep your eye on the Web site (www.akronaudubon.org) and the Newsletter.

October 28th--We're pleased to welcome back one of the premiere birders and great lecturers in this area, Dr. Andy Jones, curator of ornithology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Andy is one of the country's top researchers when it comes to DNA and defining what makes a bird a bird. Don't be turned off by the title of his presentation, "Splitting and Joining of Bird Species." He's a PhD and has to talk that way. Andy promises no blood will be shed during this presentation. If you're a lister, you'll want to know what's happening with current morphology. Is your life list in danger of shrinking? Maybe we can add a few species while sitting at home. Andy knows.

November 25--We'll continue our learning about the minutiae of birds with a great program from Professor Keith Tarvin, Department of Biology, Oberlin College. "Why Are Goldfinch Bills So Colorful?" Great question! Why are goldfinch bills so colorful? The bills of American Goldfinches are bright orange during the breeding season, and can change subtly over the course of a day or so. You don't want to miss the answer to this one. It will make for great conversation at all those holiday parties coming up.

December 14--Will be the annual National Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This will be in lieu of our regular meeting and include a free chili dinner. Come to the October and November meetings to learn how you can join in on this, the longest-running citizen science project on planet Earth. Be sure to save the date. Because of the pending holiday, the count compilers have opted to use the earliest possible day for the count. Also, there is a change of venue for the chili dinner. This year we will be meeting at the Metro Parks pavilion, Coventry Oaks in Firestone Park for our post-count chili dinner. The facility is a bigger, fancier and offers a great ambience for this type of event. The executive committee provides the chili.

Who, What and How Many

As we head into the fall and winter seasons, keeping track of birds is critical as always. Real birders never take a day off. If you'd like to help, from the comfort of your own home, here's a great program: Project FeederWatch. More than 100 studies have shown that getting closer to nature reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well-being in children and adults. So, filling feeders and counting the birds that visit may be just what the doctor ordered! For more than 20 years, that's what participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch have been doing-benefitting themselves and the birds.

The 2008-09 season of Project FeederWatch gets underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges-a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.

Beyond the benefits to birds and science, however, is the benefit to participants. "Nature is not merely an amenity; it is critical to healthy human development and functioning," says Nancy Wells, Cornell University assistant professor of design and environmental analysis. Her studies find that a view of nature through the window or access to the environment in any way improves a child's cognitive functioning and reduces the negative effects of stress on the child's psychological well-being. Wells also notes that when children spent time with nature early in life it carries over to their adult attitudes and behavior toward the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird Highlights.

A Modern-Day Audubon

There's a great article in the Ohio magazine that you might find interesting. Here's the link to its Web site, <http://www.ohiomag.com/magazine/life/article.asp?id=FB A77CC8971F4DB2B5BB70E082A90EED&page=1>. If you don't have a computer, check out the story at your local library with either this link or a copy of the magazine.

If the sight of a 10-year-old boy carrying a .22-caliber rifle and sketch pad concerned other passengers on the Cincinnati streetcar, they never mentioned it to him. After all, it was 1934, the height of the Great Depression. And if the boy with the mop of hair and big smile returned home from his adventures near the Ohio River with a brace of rabbits, more power to him. The sketchpad may have puzzled the passengers a bit more.

Whatever he hunted or fished or observed, the boy wanted to draw. Nature was art to him, and even at an early age, he wanted to be like his hero: John James Audubon, the 19th-century master of wildlife art.

"I wished I had been born a hundred years earlier so I could have floated down the river with Audubon on one of his expeditions," says John Ruthven, still a little wistful, even after a career that has brought international acclaim, scores of friends and the unofficial title of modern-day Audubon. On the eve of his 84th birthday, however, the artist with the big smile and mop of hair is far too busy to reflect for long on the past.

Important Bird Areas of Ohio Book Now Available

Audubon Ohio is pleased to announce the release of the first edition of "Important Bird Areas of Ohio," the first comprehensive guide to Ohio IBAs. The book contains important information on the IBA program in Ohio, and a detailed description of each IBA. Filled with colorful maps and photographs, the book belongs on the shelf (or in the backpack) of birders throughout Ohio.

This book will be a welcome to any Ohio birder's collection. As of this writing the book is not available online or in local book stores. That might change with a little pressure from customers, especially as the holidays approach. Talk to your local book store manager.

The book retails for \$19.95. If you would like information on how to order the book, please send a message to Ohio@audubon.org with "IBA Book" in the subject line.

Wild Bird Seed Sale

Time, once again, for the chapter's only fund-raising effort. Each year, working with the great folks at Copley Feed and Supply, we offer chapter members and others the opportunity to stock up on wild bird seed and supplies for the winter. Here's your opportunity to help the birds and the chapter. The profit from this project typically nets enough to pay for one edition of this Newsletter and, hopefully, a bit left for other educational programs.

Greater Akron Audubon Society Annual Wild Bird Seed Sale

As has been our tradition, this year's wild bird seed sale is possible through the generous cooperation of Copley Feed & Supply store on Copley Circle, 1468 S. Cleveland-Massillon Road.

Our seed is fresh and prices are competitive with retail offerings in the area. This is the chapter's only fund raising effort; profits support our programs and newsletters.

As a special incentive this year, the first 100 orders we receive will be given a coupon for 20% off the purchase of bird feeder or nesting box at Copley Feed, through the end of November. A special thanks goes to Nancy and Mark Roesner of Copley Feed for their usual outstanding generosity.

Deadline is October 28. Pick up is November 1 at Copley Feed.

Please mail your check, payable to Greater Akron Audubon Society, and completed order form ASAP to:

JoyWolf Enterprises
PO Box 26278
Akron, OH 44319

All order forms must be in by October 28 to accurately place the order with Copley Feed. Bring your form to the meeting that night to guarantee delivery.

		How many?	Total \$
Oil Sunflower, 50 pounds	\$28.00	_____	_____
Niger seed, 10 pounds	\$15.00	_____	_____
Wild bird mix:			
20 pounds	\$ 9.50	_____	_____
50 pounds	\$20.00	_____	_____
Bird Banquet, 35 pounds	\$22.00	_____	_____
Songbird Choice, 40 pounds	\$28.00	_____	_____
		TOTAL	_____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____ **(In case we must call.)**

Pick-up will be Saturday, November 1, from 9AM to 1PM, at Copley Feed.

All seed not picked up by 1PM is donated to the Seiberling Nature Realm.